

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 /066 W
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R 310529Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9449

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 20214

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: CAMPAIGN '75 -- VIOLENCE AS A CAMPAIGN FEATURE

1. AS THE GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN GAINS MOMENTUM, THE NUMBER OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CAMPAIGN IS ALSO INCREASING. SOME RECENT EXAMPLES ARE:
-- A SOCIALIST PARTY CANDIDATE IN KORAT PROVINCE TOLD CONSULATE UDORN NOVEMBER 5 THAT HE WAS NOT SENDING A CANDIDATE TO RUN IN ONE DISTRICT OF KORAT PROVINCE BECAUSE SOMPHON KEYURAPHAN, FORMER MP AND NOW DEPUTY LEADER OF THE PEOPLE'S JUSTICE PARTY, AS ASSEMBLED A GROUP OF ARMED MEN IN THAT DISTRICT AND THE SOCIALISTS FEARED FOR THE SAFETY OF THEIR CANDIDATE.
-- A SOCIAL NATIONALIST CAMPAIGN MANAGER WAS SHOT AND SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AS HE DISTRIBUTED HANDBILLS TO VILLAGERS IN NONG KHAI PROVINCE NOVEMBER 16.
-- KWAK KWANTAO, A VOTE CANVASSER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY CANDIDATE SURIN THEPKANCHANA, WAS SHOT DEAD DECEMBER 16 IN SAMUT SAKHON PROVINCE.
-- A CAMPAIGN MANAGER WAS SHOT DEAD AT THE HOUSE OF HIS CANDIDATE IN KORAT PROVINCE IN MID-DECEMBER.
-- A CAMPAIGN MANAGER IN SURABURI PROVINCE WAS SHOT DEAD

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DURING A CAMPAIGN RALLY DECEMBER 22 AFTER A QUARREL

OVER THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

2. IRONICALLY THE ONLY VIOLENT INCIDENT INVOLVING A POLITICAL CANDIDATE SO FAR DID NOT RESULT FROM POLITICAL MOTIVES. SAWANG PAHONYUT, NEW FORCE PARTY CANDIDATE IN LOPBURI PROVINCE, WAS SHOT DEAD IN EARLY DECEMBER. THE LOPBURI GOVERNOR TOLD US THAT POLITICS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS DEATH, AND THAT HE HAD NO CHANCE OF WINNING THE ELECTION ANYWAY. THE MOTIVE FOR THE SHOOTING WAS A BUSINESS CONFLICT BETWEEN RIVAL GROUPS IN LOPBURI. NEVERTHELESS, THIS INCIDENT HAS ADDED TO THE FEARS OF OTHER CANDIDATES. THAI NATIONAL PARTY LEADER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN ADMITTED PUBLICLY DECEMBER 24 THAT HE IS USING GUNMEN TO PROTECT HIM DURING HIS CAMPAIGN IN SARABURI PROVINCE.

3. VIOLENCE DURING THE CAMPAIGN WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. THAILAND HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST MURDER RATES IN THE WORLD, AND GUNS AS WELL AS HIRED KILLERS ARE PLENTIFUL. MURDER HAS BEEN A TRADITIONAL MEANS OF ELIMINATING ONE'S POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN PREVIOUS THAI ELECTION CAMPAIGNS. THE CURRENT RASH OF VIOLENCE IS OCCURRING DESPITE POLICE PREPARATIONS TO PREVENT IT. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE THAI NATIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT (TNPd), POLICE GENERAL PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN, ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 16 THAT THE TNPd WOULD SET UP A "PEACE KEEPING CENTER" IN BANGKOK TO COORDINATE THE ACTIVITIES OF POLICE THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE TNPd LT. GENERAL WITHUN YASAWAT SAID OCTOBER 20 THAT THE TNPd HAD ROUNDED UP 482 HIRED GUNMEN, MOSTLY IN PHETBURI PROVINCE, SINCE JUNE 1974 IN A MOVE TO PREVENT CAMPAIGN VIOLENCE.

4. COMMENT: THE PEOPLE OF PHETBURI HAVE HISTORICALLY OPTED FOR THE FINAL SOLUTION FOR ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS, AND THE ROUNDUP WAS CERTAINLY NOT EXECUTED WITH THE CAMPAIGN EXCLUSIVELY IN MIND. ALTHOUGH THE POLICE MEASURES WILL PROBABLY REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS DURING THE CAMPAIGN, THEY HAVE OBVIOUSLY NOT ELIMINATED VIOLENCE AS A CAMPAIGN FEATURE.

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